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Report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security

I. Introduction

1. The Security Council, by paragraph 16 of its resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, invited me to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution and to submit a report to the Council on the results of that study. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. The study on women, peace and security builds on existing research and inputs of the United Nations, its programmes, funds and specialized agencies, Member States, scholars and local and international non-governmental organizations. The preparation of the study was overseen by my Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in close cooperation with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security.

3. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) marks a landmark in the recognition of women's contribution to the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and their specific needs and concerns in armed conflict and its aftermath, as well as the responsibilities of the international community to provide effective responses, building on the Council's interest in the situation of children in armed conflict, the protection of civilians and the prevention of armed conflict.[1] In requesting the study and the report, the Council has created an opportunity to further highlight the roles and experiences of women and girls in armed conflict and its immediate aftermath.

4. The present report highlights the major findings and conclusions of the study on women, peace and security. It focuses on the challenges that must be addressed if progress is to be made in the achievement of the goal of gender equality in relation to peace and security. It includes recommendations for action (points 1-21), which the Security Council may wish to consider in order to strengthen and accelerate implementation of the objectives and recommendations already contained in resolution 1325 (2000).

II. Impact of armed conflict on women and girls

5. Women do not enjoy equal status with men in any society. Where cultures of violence and discrimination against women and girls exist prior to conflict, they will be exacerbated during conflict. If women do not participate in the decision-making structures of a society, they are unlikely to become involved in decisions about the conflict or the peace process that follows.

6. Women and children are disproportionately targeted in contemporary armed conflicts and constitute the majority of all victims. Women and children also constitute the majority of the world's refugees and internally displaced persons.

7. Civilian women and girls, like men and boys, die during armed conflict, are forcibly displaced, are injured by landmines and other weapons and lose their livelihoods, although there are important differences in the experience of women and girls. During conflict, women and girls are vulnerable to all forms of violence, in particular sexual violence and exploitation, including torture, rape, mass rape, forced pregnancy, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution and trafficking.

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These acts of violence have a political and symbolic significance and are often endorsed at the highest levels of leadership. Torture is also used against women and girls to violate their sense of self and as an attack on their communities and the men to whom they are related. A proliferation of small arms increases the risk of interpersonal violence, including domestic violence, which often continues after the conflict.

8. In addition to the gender-based and sexual violence women and girls experience during armed conflict, the impact of armed conflict on their physical and mental health is incalculable, especially the consequences of violence. They face numerous health threats grounded in biological differences. The use of sexual violence as a strategic and tactical weapon of war places women and girls at increased threat of contracting sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. This is heightened by systematic gender-based discrimination, which reduces their potential to protect themselves from such infections. The high rate of infection and death increases women's workload in maintaining their households and communities and providing care to orphaned children.

9. With the loss of men and boys from households and communities through participation in armed forces, detention or disappearance, women and girls are forced to take on more responsibility for family security and well-being, often without the necessary resources or social support. Lack of land and property rights and lack of access to, or control over, resources threaten women's livelihoods. Women's daily tasks as providers and caregivers become increasingly dangerous and difficult, especially as the availability of and access to public services and household goods shrink. The role of women in relation to ensuring food security, the provision of water and energy for household use and their responsibility for health care — in both urban and rural contexts — may also put them at risk of being injured by landmines, in cross-fire and by sexual abuse. As women become the main or only source of income for their families, they often pursue new or non-traditional occupations. Forced out of the formal sector, and facing increased competition in the informal sector, they may also be pushed into illegal activities, such as trafficking in drugs. Often controlled by organized criminal groups, these activities carry a high risk of violence.

10. Armed conflict also changes social structures and relationships. The number of child-headed households increases during conflict. Within those circumstances, girls heading households face particular marginalization owing to their low status as female adolescents and their lack of protection. Girls may also be forced into early marriages as a coping strategy in economically desperate households.

11. The differential impact of armed conflict and the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls can be seen in all phases of displacement, including initial displacement, flight, protection and assistance in refugee and displaced persons camps and resettlement and reintegration. Women encounter discrimination and human rights abuses, sexual violence and exploitation, including domestic violence, and are disadvantaged by laws, policies and programming that do not take their concerns into consideration. For example, procedures for the determination of asylum status may not take gender-based persecution into consideration. Weakened or lost social support structures lead to reduced security for women and girls, who are at risk of harassment or abuse, and to problems in accessing the assistance necessary for survival.

12. Women are also victims of detention or "disappearance". The "disappearance" of male relatives affects women, in particular in societies where their status is directly linked to their relationships with men. Women are traumatized and cannot find closure as long as they still hope for the return of their relatives. They also face additional responsibilities for the well-being of their families.

13. Women and girls are not only victims in armed conflict: they are also active agents. Driven by commitment to the political, religious or economic goals of the conflict, some women become armed combatants or collude in acts of violence. Women and girls may also be forced to follow camps of armed forces, providing domestic services and/or being used as sexual slaves. Women play an active role in informal peace processes, serving as peace activists, including by organizing and lobbying for disarmament and striving to bring about reconciliation and security before, during and after conflicts.

14. The differential impact of conflict on women and girls calls for specific responses from the international community. While the knowledge about these gender-based differences and inequalities is increasing rapidly, it is still far from comprehensive. Of much greater concern, however, is the failure to incorporate existing

knowledge on the subject into policies, planning and implementation processes in all peace operations, humanitarian activities and reconstruction efforts.

15. I submit the following for the attention of the Security Council:

Action 1

Recognize the extent of the violations of the human rights of women and girls during armed conflict and ensure that awareness of these violations is a factor in planning and implementation of all peace support operations.

Action 2

Identify and utilize local sources of information on the impact of armed conflict, the impact of interventions of peace operations on women and girls and the roles and contributions of women and girls in conflict situations, including through the establishment of regular contacts with women's groups and networks.

III. International legal framework

16. International law provides a framework of protection for individuals affected by armed conflict. International humanitarian law, in particular the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 for the protection of victims of war and their two Additional Protocols of 1977, is the area of law of primary relevance to the protection of women and girls during armed conflict. International human rights law is also applicable in times of armed conflict. International refugee law offers protection to women and girls prior to, during and in the aftermath of armed conflict. International criminal law has come to assume increasing significance in relation to crimes against women and girls during armed conflict, in particular crimes of sexual violence.

17. The protections of international humanitarian law and human rights law apply on the basis of non-discrimination. In addition, some of the provisions of international humanitarian law are of particular relevance to women, such as those seeking to reduce women's vulnerability to sexual violence. Other provisions are only applicable to women, for example, those requiring treatment of women with all consideration due to their sex. Additional protection is provided to pregnant women and mothers of young children.

18. The protections available under international human rights law apply to women and girls on the basis of non-discrimination. Key human rights instruments include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which specifically addresses traffic in, and the exploitation of prostitution of, women, a frequent occurrence in situations of conflict and their aftermath. Trafficking is comprehensively covered by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementary protocols, which have not yet entered into force. Girls benefit from the specific protections for children set out in instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

19. During the last decade, the international legal framework has expanded to address some of the particular crimes experienced by women in armed conflict. The statutes of the two International Tribunals created by the Security Council to address crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and the statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone all include gender-based violence, such as rape, enforced prostitution and trafficking during armed conflict, as well as torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, and enslavement, within the definition of war crimes, crimes against humanity and as components of the crime of genocide. Other extra-legal mechanisms, such as truth and reconciliation processes, also provide avenues of redress.

20. The International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda have issued several indictments relating to sexual violence. Sexual violence has been charged as a grave breach of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War before the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.[2] The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has convicted a defendant of crimes against humanity and genocide, inter alia, through acts of sexual violence.[3]

21. The constituent documents of the two International Tribunals, the International Criminal

Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone include provisions to ensure the delivery of gender-sensitive justice, including victim and witness protection measures. The Rome Statute has provisions for achieving fair representation of male and female judges and for ensuring the availability of legal expertise on specific issues such as violence against women and children.

22. Protection for refugee and displaced women offered by the international legal framework is supplemented by policy directives and guidelines, which, for the most part, have been formulated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) over the past 15 years. The gender-sensitive interpretation of the definition of refugee contained in the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 allows for women and girls to seek refugee status on the basis of gender-based persecution, including sexual violence. The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement also pay particular attention to the rights and needs of women and children.

23. This comprehensive international legal framework has been increasingly responsive to the experiences of women and girls, particularly where sexual violence is concerned. It is critical that these achievements are built upon by any future ad hoc tribunals that the Security Council might create. The determination of individual command responsibility for many of the offences involving sexual violence against women and girls in armed conflict has been a major advance and has undermined the culture of impunity that previously pervaded discussion in this context.

24. These advances must be maintained and further expanded. Other forms of violence affecting women and girls must also be recognized and adequately acknowledged in the legal regime. Compliance with international norms must be improved and preventive measures must be implemented, especially in light of the changed nature of conflict where combatants include non-State actors, including private militias and children, who pay little attention to the rules of international law that provide protection for women and girls in conflict, and frequently target women and girls in gender-specific ways. Women and girl victims of gender-based and other forms of violence should have the opportunity to pursue claims for compensation for injuries and other damage incurred during armed conflict.

25. I submit the following for the attention of the Security Council:

Action 3

Condemn all violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed conflict; take all necessary measures to bring to an end such violations; and call upon all parties involved in conflict to adhere at all times to their obligations under applicable principles of international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law as they pertain to women and girls.

Action 4

Ensure that amnesty provisions included in conflict settlement agreements reached under the auspices of the Security Council exclude impunity from all war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, including gender-based crimes.

Action 5

Monitor the extent to which judicial or quasi-judicial mechanisms that are established by the Security Council as part of conflict settlement arrangements interpret and apply the international legal framework pertaining to armed conflict and its aftermath in a gender-sensitive, consistent and systematic manner.

Action 6

Ensure that future ad hoc tribunals created by the Security Council build on existing statutes and include judges and advisers with legal expertise on specific issues, such as violations of the rights of women and girls, including gender-based and sexual violence; ensure that prosecutors of such ad hoc international tribunals respect the interests and personal circumstances of women and girls victims and witnesses and take into account the nature of crimes involving gender-based violence, sexual violence and violence against children.

IV. Peace processes

26. The participation of women and girls and the inclusion of gender perspectives in both formal and informal peace processes are critical to ensuring that political structures, economic and social institutions and security sectors negotiated through peace talks facilitate the achievement of greater equality between women and men.

27. There are many positive examples of women making a critical difference in the promotion of peace, particularly in preserving social order and educating for peace. Women's grass-roots organizations have sponsored peace education in many countries, including by encouraging child soldiers and others to lay down their arms. They have organized groups across party and ethnic lines, advocating for peace, and have been active in reconciliation efforts, often with the support of regional and international networks. They have advocated for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, campaigned against small arms, participated in weapons collection programmes and disseminated information on landmines. Because of their active interest in and support of disarmament processes, consultations with women's groups and networks can provide important information regarding perceptions of the dangers posed by the number or types of weapons, the identification of weapons caches and the transborder weapons trade. The role of women's groups and networks in informal peace processes has, however, not always been sufficiently recognized and supported.

28. The lack of access to mechanisms or channels for bringing the priorities and recommendations of women's informal groups and networks into more formal processes remains a particular constraint. Although the understanding of the contributions women can and do make to peace-building through informal processes is increasing, women, with few exceptions, are not present at formal peace negotiations. Often women are excluded because they are not military leaders or political decision-makers or because they did not participate in the conflict as combatants. Women are assumed to lack the appropriate expertise to negotiate, or they are left out owing to discrimination and stereotypical thinking. They may also be excluded from peace negotiations because their interests are viewed as broader than those of the men involved in the negotiations.

29. Peace negotiations and peace accords lay the foundation for rebuilding societies after conflict. They commonly determine the political, civil, economic and social structures in post-conflict situations. Concerns specific to women do not always reach the negotiating table. This is particularly so in the absence of women's participation. It has been observed that women's political mobilization prior to and their participation in negotiations make a difference in the degree of attention given to gender equality issues and the pursuit of gender-sensitive approaches in a wide range of issues, including the drafting of constitutions, implementation of land reform, access to economic opportunities and development of social policies. However, the presence of women does not guarantee attention to gender issues. All actors in peace processes have the responsibility and capacity to ensure attention to gender equality concerns in peace agreements.

30. There are a number of positive examples where the Security Council has recognized and supported the informal peace initiatives of women's groups and networks, including its meetings with women's groups and networks during its missions to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kosovo and Sierra Leone. Since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), Arria formula meetings with women representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also contributed to Council debates on peace processes.

31. The Secretariat and other United Nations entities have also supported the informal peace activities of women's organizations as well as their efforts to participate in formal peace processes and to contribute to the development of new political structures in post-conflict situations. However, further systematic efforts need to be made to fully involve women at all stages of consolidating peace.

32. All international actors involved in peace processes should be familiar with the extent of women's peace-related activism at grass-roots level. Efforts are needed to achieve greater representation of women in formal peace negotiations. Women's capacities as participants and leaders in peace negotiations need to be further enhanced, including through training and participation in Track II negotiations. Information collection processes, especially those that target civil society and research institutes, must also identify and involve women's groups and networks. Ongoing United Nations cooperation with women's groups and networks during

peace processes should be more fully documented, including in my reports to the Council.

33. To facilitate greater contact with women's groups and networks, I intend to establish a database of gender specialists as well as women's groups and networks in countries and regions in conflict. I also encourage Member States, donors and civil society to provide financial, political and technical support for women's peace-building initiatives and networks.

34. The effectiveness of preventive diplomacy and fact-finding could be enhanced by soliciting the opinions of local women's groups. Greater attention to the gender norms and customs of a society can also provide useful insights in refining early warning indicators and strengthening conflict prevention mechanisms. I have observed elsewhere that strengthening of the rule of law is an essential element of conflict prevention and, within that, the protection of women's human rights through a focus on gender equality in constitutional, legislative, judicial and electoral reform.[4] I will also call for a review of the gender perspectives in conflict prevention, early warning systems and preventive diplomacy.

35. Attention to gender-specific consequences of sanctions, based on collection and use of data disaggregated by sex and age, would allow the Council to fine-tune sanctions so as to minimize negative consequences for all civilians.

36. I submit the following for the attention of the Security Council:

Action 7

Explicitly integrate gender perspectives into the terms of reference of Security Council missions to countries and regions in conflict; request briefings for the Security Council members on the situation of women and girls in conflicts; include gender specialists in the teams wherever possible; and ensure consultation with women's groups and networks.

Action 8

Ensure that all peace accords brokered by the United Nations systematically and explicitly address the consequences of the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, their contributions to the peace processes and their needs and priorities in the post-conflict context.

Action 9

Ensure full involvement of women in negotiations of peace agreements at national and international levels, including through provision of training for women and women's organizations on formal peace processes.

V. Peacekeeping operations

37. Multidimensional peacekeeping operations may include mandates to assist in elections, monitor human rights and carry out police functions. Mandates may encompass the development of institutions to support the rule of law, the creation of State administrative structures, the establishment of mine action programmes, the repatriation of refugees and the delivery of humanitarian aid. There is great potential in multidimensional peacekeeping operations for addressing gender perspectives, especially in areas such as human rights monitoring, establishment or restructuring of institutions and police training.

38. Clear reference to gender equality issues in mandates for missions and adequate budgetary provisions can facilitate the integration of gender perspectives in all substantive activities and provide criteria to measure performance. Few mandates of peacekeeping missions make explicit reference to women and girls, or to the different impact of armed conflict or post-conflict recovery on women and girls. None have included a commitment to gender equality as part of a mission's mandate.

39. A fundamental aspect of peacekeeping operations is to establish security. Differences in men's and women's security priorities and needs, both in the home and in the public sphere, need to be identified when working to establish a safe environment. Civilian police components, in their work with new or reconstructed police forces, as well as in human rights monitoring, need to be able to address crimes committed against women and girls in a gender-sensitive manner. Public information activities of a mission should ensure that both women and men have access to information. Peacekeeping missions benefit from contacts with and access to the knowledge and expertise of local women's organizations.

40. A number of ways to enhance attention to gender perspectives in peace operations need to be addressed. A clear commitment to the promotion of gender equality throughout the entire mission is required, from the inception of its mandate to its end. This commitment must be translated into concrete actions in all areas of the mission and should be the responsibility of all mission staff, particularly senior managers. Many managers and professional staff are still uncertain about the relevant gender perspectives in their areas of work and as to how they can integrate these perspectives in different areas of peacekeeping. More systematic training of all staff on gender perspectives before and after their deployment is necessary. Gender perspectives have to be integrated into all standard operating procedures, manuals, instructions and other instruments offering guidance to peacekeeping operations.

41. Lack of appropriate tools such as guidelines and training programmes, as well as lack of financial resources, hamper attention to gender perspectives. The concrete tools being developed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to help mainstream gender perspectives into the daily work of all mission components should help to meet these needs.

42. Gender expertise at both Headquarters and mission levels is necessary to support top management in carrying out their responsibility for gender mainstreaming. The experience of gender units and gender advisers in missions such as the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) (now the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET)), as well as the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), should provide useful insights on the mandates, location, reporting lines and resources of such units or advisers for maximum effectiveness. Gender specialists in the field do require backstopping from Headquarters. In June 2001, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations recognized the need for gender expertise at Headquarters and recommended the establishment of a dedicated gender capacity for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, for which resources have not yet been approved.[5]

43. A number of important efforts have been made, and some successes achieved, in incorporating gender perspectives into peacekeeping operations. These include measures taken by UNMIBH, UNMIK and UNTAET to promote gender balance in the local police forces and to work with new or restructured police forces on issues related to domestic violence and trafficking in women and girls. The missions in Kosovo and East Timor also actively supported the increased participation of women in governmental and administrative structures through training and capacity-building workshops. The Gender Affairs Unit of UNTAET facilitated the integration of gender perspectives into its programmes and policies, building capacity both within the Mission and in East Timorese society.

44. The need to increase the participation of women in all aspects of peace operations, among international and local staff, and particularly at the highest levels of decision-making, has been raised as a priority concern. I have taken a number of steps to increase the number of female staff in peace operations, although we are as yet far from the goal of 50-50 gender balance. The first female Special Representative of the Secretary-General was appointed in 1992. Now, 10 years later, there is still only one female Special Representative. There are three female Deputy Special Representatives. The Secretariat will make more determined efforts to increase the appointment of women at the Special Representative and Deputy Special Representative levels. In addition, I reiterate my appeal to Member States to provide names of qualified women candidates to serve in high-level positions. I will set concrete targets for the appointment of women as my Special Representatives and Special Envoys in order to reach the overall target of 50 per cent by 2015. I also call on Member States to act in a proactive manner by identifying women to serve in senior decision-making positions and increasing the recruitment of women as military observers, peacekeeping troops and civilian police. It should be noted, however, that promoting gender equality is not women's responsibility alone, nor will women's participation automatically lead to greater attention to women's needs and priorities in peacekeeping activities.

45. Codes of conduct establish expected standards of behaviour from United Nations staff. Because it is evident that prostitution, often combined with trafficking, increases in the context of international

interventions, further measures are needed to prevent trafficking and the sexual exploitation of women in the context of international peace operations. Violence against women and girls and trafficking cannot be tolerated. All missions have clear instructions to thoroughly investigate any allegations of sexual exploitation or assault by any peacekeeping personnel and to ensure that offenders are duly disciplined. In addition, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is reviewing and improving its procedures on disciplinary matters and has requested missions to improve monitoring mechanisms to ensure appropriate action. I call on troop-contributing States to enhance their own efforts to ensure that such violations do not occur, to investigate and prosecute effectively cases of alleged misconduct and to set up adequate accountability mechanisms and disciplinary measures.

46. I submit the following for the attention of the Security Council:

Action 10

Incorporate gender perspectives explicitly into mandates of all peacekeeping missions, including provisions to systematically address this issue in all reports to the Security Council.

Action 11

Require that data collected in research, assessments and appraisals, monitoring and evaluation and reporting on peace operations is systematically disaggregated by sex and age and that specific data on the situation of women and girls and the impact of interventions on them is provided.

Action 12

Ensure necessary financial and human resources for gender mainstreaming, including the establishment of gender advisers/units in multidimensional peacekeeping operations and capacity-building activities, as well as targeted projects for women and girls as part of approved mission budgets.

VI. Humanitarian operations

47. Today's complex humanitarian operations, which often begin even prior to the cessation of hostilities, commonly involve a large and diverse number of humanitarian and development organizations. Given the many ways in which humanitarian operations and development interventions overlap, it is critical to ensure that gender perspectives are systematically integrated into the full range of emergency operations from their initial stages.

48. Many of the experiences and needs of women and girls in armed conflict continue on during humanitarian and emergency situations. The specific protection needs of women and girls have to be identified and addressed in the delivery of humanitarian aid, including through the promotion of access to vulnerable populations and the separation of civilians and armed elements.

49. Pressure to design programmes rapidly should not lead to a neglect of gender perspectives. It is critical that the needs and priorities of women and girls are given attention in initial surveys, appraisals and assessment missions so that they are fully incorporated into the policy frameworks, strategies and programming processes that guide the choice of activities and resource allocations in humanitarian phases. Women should be actively involved in needs assessments and the distribution of aid.

50. An understanding of the vulnerability of women and girls in camps, particularly where there is a proliferation of weapons, should inform all management and operational decisions and should lead to the establishment of adequate protection mechanisms. Protection from and prevention of violence, including gender-based and sexual violence, requires practical steps. Women and girls face the risk of violence when camps are poorly designed and security inside and outside of camps is inadequate. The presence of military forces and crossfire near camps poses additional risks. Refugee and internally displaced women and girls also face the risk of violence at the hands of those who are in a position to facilitate their passage, determine their refugee status or issue their identity cards, as well as during forced return to their homes. Women may be forced to engage in prostitution in exchange for food or other essential goods and services.

51. Effective distribution of relief and of other benefits requires awareness of the experiences and needs of women and girls in a given crisis. Women should be fully involved in the management of refugee

camps, including in decision-making. Particular attention has to be paid to the manner in which refugees and displaced persons are registered so that women are not excluded from direct access to basic goods and services, from social and economic programmes or from decision-making opportunities. Gender issues in relation to livelihoods, food security and health in post-conflict situations require adequate responses. Based on the principles of non-discrimination and equality between women and men, United Nations entities and other organizations must counter any resistance to providing relief or work opportunities to women and girls.

52. Entities providing humanitarian assistance, especially those that are members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, have developed many constructive policies, strategies and guidelines to ensure that gender perspectives and the needs of women are consistently addressed by all staff involved in humanitarian operations. The challenge is to ensure that these methods and tools are fully utilized. All categories of staff require adequate and appropriate training, and the recruitment of women for humanitarian operations should be increased. Recent reports of sexual abuse of refugees by humanitarian workers in West Africa have demonstrated that more specific and more strictly enforced codes of conduct and disciplinary measures are necessary. The Office of Internal Oversight Services has conducted an investigation of these allegations and will present a report on its findings to the General Assembly. I welcome the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's plan of action on sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian crises as a positive initiative of the United Nations system and call upon all Committee members and others concerned to ensure its swift implementation.

53. I submit the following for the attention of the Security Council:

Action 13

Urge parties to conflict to ensure that agencies of the United Nations and other international organizations, regional organizations and NGOs have safe and unhindered access to populations in need, especially women and girls.

Action 14

Increase the participation of women and girls, fully utilize their capacities and give attention to their needs and priorities in the initial stages of programming and service delivery in humanitarian crises in order to optimize the benefits for women and girls.

VII. Reconstruction and rehabilitation

54. Sustainable and durable peace requires the participation of women and girls, as well as the integration of gender perspectives in all reconstruction processes to ensure the creation of more equitable and sustainable societies. Reconstruction efforts must be based on human rights principles, including non-discrimination, to ensure that inequalities and discrimination that existed prior to conflict, which may have deepened during conflict, are not perpetuated or exacerbated.

55. Constitutional reform processes provide opportunities for codifying principles of non-discrimination and equality on the basis of sex. Legislative reform should repeal discriminatory provisions in areas such as nationality, property rights, and inheritance, as well as address violence against women. Gender-sensitivity of courts, which is important to remove any possible bias, requires awareness-raising and training. Ensuring justice for victims of gender-based violations of international humanitarian and human rights law is a critical aspect of reconstruction. Where truth and reconciliation commissions are established, equitable access and gender-sensitive procedures must be assured.

56. The creation of electoral systems should guarantee free and fair elections and universal suffrage. Special measures, including quota and training for women as voters and candidates, may be needed to ensure that women can exercise these rights and that their equitable representation in elected office can be increased. While women may have successfully organized during conflict, additional support, including financial support, may be necessary to ensure their continuing active participation in civil society organizations and public life once conflict is ended.

57. Economic reconstruction must be informed by an understanding of the challenges women and girls face in accessing employment in both the formal and

informal sectors, as well as in areas of agricultural production and food security, particularly in regions where women are the principal food producers. The needs and priorities of women as well as men should be taken into account in economic policy reform. Microcredit should not be seen as a panacea for increasing women's access to economic resources and incorporating gender perspectives in economic development. Women should be fully represented in economic decision-making.

58. Social reconstruction includes the reconstruction of damaged or destroyed social sectors, notably health care, education and social service institutions, and involves a long-term process of social healing and reintegration. The severe disruption of social networks caused by armed conflict contributes to growing numbers of marginalized groups, including war widows, child-headed households, orphans, the disabled and former child soldiers. Addressing the needs and priorities of women and girls should be an integral part in the design and implementation of social healing processes. The problems women and girls have faced in conflict and displacement, in particular with regard to human rights, reproductive health, domestic violence and trafficking, must be directly addressed.

59. Effective progress in promoting gender equality in reconstruction processes is hampered by under-resourcing and marginalization of targeted interventions for women as well as by the lack of systematic attention to gender perspectives in all mainstream policies, strategies and activities. The extent to which gender perspectives are factored into the design and implementation of programmes on the ground in all areas of reconstruction needs to be more systematically monitored, evaluated and documented.

60. Members States, United Nations entities and civil society organizations play a critical role in reconstruction processes. I call upon all actors involved in reconstruction processes to:

Action 15

Develop clear strategies and action plans (with targets and timetables) on the incorporation of gender perspectives in rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes, including monitoring mechanisms, and incorporate explicit attention to the situation of women and girls in needs assessments, initial appraisals and implementation plans for all sectors; and also develop targeted activities, with adequate resources, focused on specific constraints facing women and girls.

Action 16

Ensure that, in efforts to secure local ownership for reconstruction processes, women's groups and networks are actively involved, particularly at decision-making levels.

Action 17

Identify and address social and legal barriers to education and employment for women and girls, through both mainstream and targeted interventions.

Action 18

Ensure that attention to gender perspectives in economic reconstruction entails analysis of economic policy-making and planning from a gender perspective, as well as the increased participation of women in economic decision-making; and incorporate gender perspectives into all support for national budget processes, in line with the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development (2002).

VIII. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

61. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes are integral components of the peace process and post-conflict activities, which are increasingly incorporated in formal peace accords. One of the most important goals of disarmament relates to the collection, safe storage and destruction of armaments and ammunition following conflicts, along with the demobilization of combatants and their reintegration into society. In recent years, national governments and regional and international organizations have been involved in disarmament activities, some of which entail the provision of various material incentives, such as community development assistance, to encourage the surrender of weapons. Such disarmament activities are of great importance to women and girls because of the heightened threat to their personal security owing

to the proliferation of weapons in post-conflict situations. For this reason, women and girls are often actively involved in weapons collections programmes.

62. Successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives are based on an understanding that combatants are not only men, but also women, girls and boys. Initiatives that target only males above the age of 18, who fit the international definition of soldiers, fail to identify the needs and priorities of women and girl combatants. If women and girl combatants are not registered in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes they cannot access the different forms of assistance provided.

63. A limited notion of combatants also restricts the chances that those women and children who, willingly or unwillingly, supported the fighters as "camp-followers" will be able to access assistance through these programmes. The status and situation of women and girls used as domestic servants and sexual slaves needs to be explicitly addressed, including, in particular, the effects of sexual and other forms of abuse and resulting trauma.

64. Even where women and girls have not been actively involved in armed conflict it is important to take into account its disruptive impact on family structures and relations and to be aware of the problems both demobilized combatants and their families and communities may encounter in reintegration processes. The risks of increased domestic violence have to be taken into account and strategies developed to address this problem.

65. I call upon all Member States, United Nations entities and civil society organizations involved in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes to:

Action 19

Incorporate the needs and priorities of women and girls as ex-combatants, "camp-followers" and families of ex-combatants in the design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including the design of camps, the distribution of benefits and access to basic resources and services, such as food, water, health care and counselling, in order to ensure the success of such programmes and the participation and full access to benefits for women and girls.

Action 20

Increase the number of programmes for child soldiers, fully incorporate attention to the specific situation and needs of girl soldiers and identify means to support child soldiers, including girls, who do not enter disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Action 21

Recognize the impact of armed conflict and displacement on family relations and develop awareness of the risk of increased domestic violence, especially in the families of ex-combatants; and develop programmes on the prevention of domestic violence, targeting families and communities, and especially male ex-combatants.

IX. Concluding observations

66. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) has galvanized the Member States, the United Nations system and civil society, including at the grass-roots level. The suffering of women and girls during armed conflict and its aftermath has been widely documented. Women's contributions to peacemaking and peace-building are still less recognized and utilized. During the last two years, the Security Council has increasingly focused its attention on the situation of women and girls in armed conflict. However, these issues are often discussed as a separate item rather than being integrated into the Council's deliberations. In order to effectively respond to the needs and priorities of women and girls during armed conflict, gender perspectives have to be systematically integrated into all peace-building, peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts and during humanitarian operations and reconstruction processes.

67. International law and existing strategies and guidelines within United Nations entities provide a strong framework for addressing gender perspectives within the context of armed conflict and its aftermath. Despite positive efforts undertaken, gender perspectives are still not systematically incorporated into all activities related to peace and security. Much

remains to be done to ensure that the existing frameworks and the recommendations in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) are fully implemented. Challenges to fully utilizing women's contributions across the wide range of activities relevant to peace and security persist at many levels.

68. We can no longer afford to minimize or ignore the contributions of women and girls to all stages of conflict resolution, peacemaking, peace-building, peacekeeping and the reconstruction processes. Sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men. It is my hope that the Security Council, Member States, the United Nations system, NGOs, civil society and others will take further decisive action to ensure the participation of women and girls and fully incorporate their concerns into all our efforts to promote peace and security.

Notes

[1] See A/55/163-S/2000/712, A/56/342-S/2001/852, S/1999/957, S/2001/331 and A/55/985-S/2001/574 and Corr.1.

[2] *Prosecutor v. Delalic and Others*, Case No. IT-96-21, Judgement (16 November 1998).

[3] *Prosecutor v. Akayesu*, Case No. ICTR-96-4, Judgement (2 September 1998).

[4] A/55/985-S/2002/574 and Corr.1.

[5] Recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/977), annex C.